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HONORABLE DUTY DOMINATES IN GRADE III, \$200,000 LUKAS CLASSIC

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (Saturday, Sept. 30, 2017) – **Honorable Duty** went straight to the front, repelled challenges with a quarter-mile to run and proved to be utterly superior in the stretch to win Saturday's fifth running of the \$200,000 Lukas Classic (Grade III) at Churchill Downs by 4 ¾ lengths over **Money Flows**.

The 5-year-old Distorted Humor gelding, owned by **David A. Ross' DAARS Inc.**, covered the 1 1/8 miles in 1:49.42. It was his first start in 15 weeks since finishing second to current early Breeders' Cup Classic (GI) favorite **Gun Runner** in June's \$500,000 Stephen Foster Handicap Presented by GE Appliances (GI).

Churchill Downs' top jockey **Corey Lanerie** rode the winner for trainer **Brendan Walsh**. It was one of four winners on the day, which also included a triumph aboard **Awesome Slew** in the \$100,000 Ack Ack (GIII).

Breaking the outside post No. 7, **Honorable Duty** dictated the pace when front-runner **Flashy Jewel** was bumped at the start. He easily made his way to rail as the field of seven older horses passed the finish line the first time around the one-mile oval. **Honorable Duty**, with **Flashy Jewel** just off his right hip, ran the first quarter mile in :24.29, the half in :48.96 and three-quarters of a mile in 1:13.51. As the field neared the quarter pole on the final turn, all but a fading **Albano** were within a length of **Honorable Duty**, who resiliently cut the corner and spurted clear to widen his winning margin down the lane.

"As Brendan (Walsh) told me after the race, 'That was just a steering job,'" Lanerie said. "I can't say enough how much of a great job the team did. The toughest part today was just getting him to the gate. The plan originally was to sit off of **Flashy Jewel** because he always shows speed. We caught a flier out of the gate so we just went for it from there. He sat the entire way with his ears up and very comfortable. Even when the horses got to me around the turn he still had his ears up and moved very easily."

The victory was worth \$121,520 which increased **Honorable Duty's** earnings to \$795,796 with a record of 15-7-4-1. The Lukas Classic was **Honorable Duty's** third stakes win this year. Over the winter, he swept Fair Grounds' dirt series for older horses – December's \$75,000 Tenacious, February's \$125,000 Mineshaft Handicap (GIII) and April's \$400,000 New Orleans Handicap (GII) – before finishing second in Churchill Downs' two prominent spring races for older horses, the \$400,000 Alysheba Presented by Big Fish Casino (GII) on Kentucky Oaks Day and the Stephen Foster on June 17.

One year ago, **Honorable Duty** was fifth in the Lukas Classic, which was won by **Noble Bird**.

Honorable Duty is out of the A.P. Indy mare Mesmeric and was bred in Kentucky by **Juddmonte Farms**.

Honorable Duty rewarded his backers with payoffs of \$3.20, \$2.60 and \$2.10 as the odds-on 3-5 favorite. **Money Flows**, ridden by **Miguel Mena**, returned \$7.80 and \$5.20 with **Seeking the Soul** finishing another head back in third under **Florent Geroux** and paid \$4.40 to show.

Fear the Cowboy, Eagle, Albano and **Flashy Jewel** completed the order of finish.

"He ran such a great race today," Walsh said. "We had a pretty tough spring campaign with him so after the Stephen Foster we gave him some time off to focus on the fall campaign."

His next targets could be the \$200,000 Fayette (GII) at Keeneland on Oct. 28 and the \$500,000 Clark Handicap Presented by Norton Healthcare (GI) at Churchill Downs on "Black Friday," Nov. 24.

The Lukas Classic, which earned Grade III status for the first time and received a \$25,000 purse increase to \$200,000, honors the iconic 82-year-old Hall of Fame trainer **D. Wayne Lukas**. The four-time winner of the Kentucky Derby and Kentucky Oaks and conditioner of 26 Eclipse Award-winning champions has been based at Churchill Downs' Barn 44 since 1989.

Three in a Row for Mr. Misunderstood, Remains Perfect on Turf with Jefferson Cup Triumph

Earlier on the card, **Staton Flurry's Mr. Misunderstood** collected his third straight victory and remained perfect in six starts on turf when he spurted clear inside the final eighth of a mile to win the 41st running of the \$100,000 Jefferson Cup (Listed) for 3-year-olds.

Ridden by **Florent Geroux** and trained by **Brad Cox**, **Mr. Misunderstood** – named after the **Eric Church** hit song – had a perfect trip tracking the early leaders before he swung out at the top of the stretch to collar stablemate **Adonis Creed** in deep stretch and win by 2 ¾ lengths and clocked 1 1/8 miles on the Matt Winn Turf Course in 1:47.78 – the third-fastest clocking in 27 renewals over the distance and surface.

Mr. Misunderstood won for the seventh time in 11 starts and the \$60,760 winner's share jumped the Archarcharch gelding's earnings to \$304,554. The Jefferson Cup was his third stakes victory. Previously, the Kentucky-bred won the \$60,000 Prelude and \$200,000 Super Derby over Louisiana Downs' turf course.

"Well, this made the trip from Arkansas worth it," said Flurry, a 27-year-old native of Hot Springs, Ark. "This horse simply loves the turf. We found that out last year at Fair Grounds when we gambled and ran him for a \$30,000 tag. He remains perfect on the grass and Brad's team has done a phenomenal job with him."

He paid \$3.40, \$2.40 as the 3-5 betting choice in the field of eight.

\$78,527 Carryover for Single 6 Jackpot; Mandatory Payout for Sunday's 10-Race Closing Day Card

Racing at Churchill Downs resumes Sunday for closing day of the 11-day September Meet. The first of 10 races is 12:45 p.m. Eastern and there's a **\$78,527 carryover** in the **Single 6 Jackpot**, which has a **mandatory payout** because of the meet's conclusion. The six-race sequence will cover Races 5-10 starting at 2:45 p.m.

The race to be crowned Churchill Downs' **September Meet champions** will be decided. At the conclusion of Saturday's 11-race card, Lanerie had a 22-10 lead over **Brian Hernandez Jr.** in the jockey standings en route to his 14th riding title in the last 16 meets beneath the Twin Spires. **Brad Cox** and **Kenny McPeck** were tied with seven wins apiece, one more than **Mike Maker**, in the trainer standings. Perennial leading owners **Ken and Sarah Ramsey** had a 5-4 lead over **Paul Fireman's Fern Circle Stables** to be the top owners at the meet.

Sunday also doubles as **Family Adventure Day Presented by Kroger**. Families are encouraged to bring the kids to Churchill Downs for a day of racing and family activities including pony rides, inflatables, petting zoo, stick horse races on the turf course, face painting and more.

Sunday's **National Weather Service** forecast for Louisville calls for ideal conditions: sunny skies with a high near 76.

AWESOME SLEW RUNS DOWN THE PLAYER IN ACK ACK THRILLER

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (Saturday, Sept. 30, 2017) – Live Oak Plantation's homebred **Awesome Slew** proved to be one of the nation's top middle distance runners when he ran down up-and-comer **The Player** inside the final eighth of a mile to win Saturday's stirring 25th renewal of the \$100,000 Ack Ack (Grade III) at Churchill Downs.

Awesome Slew, ridden by **Corey Lanerie** and trained by **Mark Casse**, ran one mile in 1:35.02 to prevail by one length. It was another 9 ¼ lengths back to third-place finisher **Pinson**.

Awesome Slew had been facing a stellar roster of rivals in top seven-furlong and one-mile races this year. Transferred to the care of Casse in February, Awesome Slew defeated multiple Grade I winner **A.P. Indian** in the seven-furlong Commonwealth (GIII) at Keeneland. He also had strong efforts when second to **Limousine Liberal** in the Churchill Downs (GII) on Kentucky Derby Day, **Sharp Azteca** in the Gulfstream Park Handicap (GII), **Drefong** in Saratoga's Forego (GI) and **Mind Your Biscuits** in the Belmont Sprint Championship (GII). Awesome Slew also finished fourth behind **Mor Spirit** and Sharp Azteca in the one-mile Metropolitan Handicap (GI) at Belmont Park.

Following his performance Saturday, it appears that Awesome Slew will head west for the \$1 million Las Vegas Dirt Mile (GI) at Del Mar on Friday, Nov. 3. Three of the last four Ack Ack winners – **Pants On Fire** (2013), **Tapiture** (2015) and **Tom's Ready** (2016) – used the race as a springboard to the Breeders' Cup Dirt Mile, as well.

Warrior's Club and Pinson battled for the early Ack Ack lead and directed the field of nine 3-year-olds and up through early fractions of :23.07 and :46.50 as The Player tracked in third and Awesome Slew raced in sixth. Warrior's Club began to fade midway around the turn as The Player poked his head in front. Lanerie dropped his hands and asked Awesome Slew for his best run and the 4-year-old quickly began to pick off rivals with a five-wide rally before drawing even with The Player at the eighth-mile pole.

"Turning for home I had a ton of horse under me," Lanerie said.

The seasoned Awesome Slew's class was undeniable in deep stretch as he edged clear from The Player, who proved to be a fascinating challenger.

"That horse (Awesome Slew) outran him," said The Player's trainer **"Buff" Bradley**. "He was running – they both were running."

"The goal for this spot was to give him an easier race," said **Norman Casse**, assistant to his father Mark. "He's been facing some of the best sprinters in the country so he needed to build his confidence back up. He did everything well today and the distance was perfect. There's still some discussion to be had but right now we'll point towards the \$1 million Breeders' Cup Dirt Mile.

The first prize was \$59,520 and hiked Awesome Slew's bankroll to \$952,940 with a record of 16-5-4-3.

Awesome Slew paid \$3.20, \$2.20 and \$2.10 as the odds-on 3-5 favorite. The Player, ridden by **Calvin Borel**, returned \$3.60 and \$3.40. Pinson, a 78-1 longshot under **C.J. McMahon**, paid \$15.

Harmac, Gray Sky, Conquest Big E, Zulu, Warrior's Club and Etruscan completed the order of finish.

Awesome Slew is son of 1998 Breeders' Cup Classic (GI) winner Awesome Again out of the Seeking the Gold mare Slewfoundmoney. He was bred in Florida by his owner **Charlotte Weber**.

The race is named in honor of **Cain Hoy Stable's** 1971 Horse of the Year **Ack Ack**, who is enshrined in the National Museum of Racing and Hall of Fame. In his only Churchill Downs appearance, Ack Ack won the 1969 Derby Trial in 1:34.40 which was a track record for one mile that has since been eclipsed.

LUKAS CLASSIC QUOTES

COREY LANERIE, jockey of HONORABLE DUTY (winner): "As Brendan (Walsh) told me after the race, 'That was just a steering job.' I can't say enough how much of a great job the team did. The toughest part today was just getting him to the gate. The plan originally was to sit off of Flashy Jewel because he always shows speed. We caught a flier out of the gate so we just went for it from there. He sat the entire way with his ears up and very comfortable. Even when the horses got to me around the turn he still had his ears up and moved very easily."

BRENDAN WALSH, trainer of HONORABLE DUTY (winner): "He ran such a great race today. We had a pretty tough spring campaign with him so after the Stephen Foster we gave him some time off to focus on the fall campaign. I'm not entirely sure what we'll do quite yet for the remainder of the year but our original plan was the (Oct. 28) \$200,000 Fayette (Grade II at Keeneland) then the (Nov. 24) \$500,000 Clark Handicap (Grade I at Churchill Downs)."

AL STALL JR., trainer of MONEY FLOWS (runner-up): "I'm glad I'm not a rider because the pace didn't set-up anything like I thought it would on paper with the grey horse (Flashy Jewel) not breaking so well. The favorite was just kind of jogging out there and he's the best horse. I thought our horse was comfortable and finished up nice and he gave us something to point for later this year. He'll be a good overnight guy at Fair Grounds."

MIGUEL MENA, jockey on MONEY FLOWS (runner-up): "He had a nice trip. The horse was doing good and he ran a nice race. He ran a very good race – a winning race."

DALLAS STEWART, trainer of SEEKING THE SOUL (third): "He ran well. He had a little traffic, but no real problems. He just got outrun. No excuses – he tried hard."

FLORENT GEROUX, jockey on SEEKING THE SOUL (third): "He had a pretty good trip. I was hoping for a little more pace, but when the 4-horse (Flashy Jewel) didn't break very well it compromised our chances. Our horse was a little closer and he was at the mercy of what was happening in front of him. But he ran a good race today, finished a good third and it was encouraging for the future."

ACK ACK QUOTES

COREY LANERIE, jockey of AWESOME SLEW (winner): "We found a good spot early behind horses. I could see the leaders dueling and wanted to get in position on the outside to set me up for a late run. Turning for home I had a ton of horse under me. I just want to thank the Casse team for letting me ride this one. They did a great job to get him ready today."

NORM CASSE, assistant trainer of AWESOME SLEW (winner): "The goal for this spot was to give him an easier race. He's been facing some of the best sprinters in the country so he needed to build his confidence back up. He did everything well today and the distance was perfect. There's still some discussion to be had but right now we'll point towards the (Nov. 3) \$1 million (Las Vegas) Breeders' Cup Dirt Mile (GI at Del Mar)."

WILLIAM "BUFF" BRADLEY, trainer of THE PLAYER (runner-up): Q: Did he run big enough to try and go to the Breeders' Cup (Mile)? "No. That horse (Awesome Slew) outran him. Calvin rode him beautifully, got him to the top of the stretch and tried to get away from that horse, but that horse ran him down. He's just a very nice horse. But we're very proud of The Player. We thought he ran awesome. He's been fun. He was running – they both were running."

CALVIN BOREL, jockey on THE PLAYER (runner-up) – "He ran a big race. I knew that (Awesome Slew) was the horse to beat and I thought that, turning for home, I could maybe get away from him – which he did. But it just wasn't enough. My horse run his race and we had no excuse. We'll have fun the rest of the year with him."

JEFFERSON CUP QUOTES

FLORENT GEROUX, jockey of MR. MISUNDERSTOOD (winner): “This horse really loves the grass. I’m grateful to be able to ride him again. The pace was pretty slow early and he bobbled a couple of times on the backstretch and didn’t really get over the ground that well. I asked him a little bit to keep him in the race and he responded perfectly.”

BRAD COX, trainer of MR. MISUNDERSTOOD (winner) and ADONIS CREED (runner-up): “Adonis Creed ran a really nice race. We recently got him in our barn (previously trained by Kiaran McLaughlin) and I wanted to take blinkers off to get him to relax a little more and he did exactly that. Shaun (Bridgmohan) rode a really nice race on him. Pinch Hit is simply a model of consistency and he’s really been proving that lately. We took blinkers off him and switched him back to the turf and that has really helped. We’ll target the (Nov. 11) Commonwealth Turf (GIII) then probably give him a break for a spring campaign next year.”

STATON FLURRY, owner of MR. MISUNDERSTOOD (winner): “Well, this made the trip from Arkansas worth it. This horse simply loves the turf. We found that out last year at Fair Grounds when we gambled and ran him for a \$30,000 tag. He remains perfect on the grass and Brad’s team has done a phenomenal job with him.”

SHAUN BRIDGMOHAN, jockey on ADONIS CREED (runner-up): “I thought he had a perfect trip. He ran hard. The winner ran a phenomenal race today, but my horse kept trying and he ran a super race.”

IAN WILKES, trainer of GIANT PAYDAY (third): “Giant Payday just didn’t quite switch-off enough, but no excuses – we were third-best. He ran well.”

CHRIS LANDEROS, jockey on GIANT PAYDAY (third): “His trip was good, but it was the opposite of what I wanted. I wanted him to sit back and settle, but it was a slow pace and that forced my hand. He ran a good race, but for him to run to my expectation he needed a little more pace in front of him and just let him take kind of a breather out there. He still ran hard, but he just didn’t have much to finish with as I wanted.”

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